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# (SNP078) Howard Lam interviewed by Dorothy Noble Smith, transcribed by Henry Heatwole

Howard Lam

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Smith: We are interviewing Mr. Howard Lam, who used to live in Jollet Hollow. You owned property that was almost taken over by the Park, didn't you?

Lam: Well no we didn't own the property. We rented the property where we lived, in Jollet Hollow.

Smith: From whom did you rent it?

Lam: From a Gordon man, Harm Gordon, he lived in Prince William County. He used to live here but he moved to Prince William County.

Smith: Was it a regular working farm.

Lam: Well, no, it was just a small, it was mountain land. Most of the land was in woods. It was mountain land. It was a little over 100 acres that we . It was in woods all except just a couple small lots around the house and the garden.

Smith: So what did you all do on this property?

Lam: Well we raised our garden, and then we had cows, and chickens, and pigs; we raised pigs for our meat.

Smith: Did you do any logging?

Lam: Well, no, not for ourselves. I worked on the stave mill for another man, for whom (?) I used to work on the stave mill to make staves, and worked in the woods to cut the wood too.

Smith: Was that far away from your home?

Lam: No, that was only a couple of miles from where I lived.

Smith: Was that property taken over by the Park?

Lam: No, that was not taken by the Park.

Smith: You were fairly close to where the mountain people were.

Lam: Oh, yes.

Smith: Were your customs pretty much the same as theirs?

Lam: Yes.

Smith: How long did your family live there?

Lam: Well, they lived there till I was 25 years old. I was born and raised there, and I was 25 years old when we left there.

Smith: Had your family been around in that area always?

Lam: Yes, they had been there. daddy they was from a place called Weaver Hollow. That was over just a little further back from over here .

Smith: How come did they move from Weaver Hollow?

Lam: Well, see, when they were married they moved into Jollet Hollow to live then.

Smith: Did you know any of the people in the southern section? of what is now Park land. You know, from Swift Run Gap down.

Lam: You mean back toward ?

Smith: Along the Rockingham side.

Lam: Yeah, I knew some of the people in there.

Smith: We have very very little information about those people. So I wonder, did you ever visit them?

Lam: Yes, I used to visit some of the people. Well I don't know exactly what section you mean.

Smith: Well like from Swift Run Gap, you know Elkton goes into Swift Run Gap, and then down below that, south of that.

Lam: Yeah, well, I had people lived back at Big Meadow. My great grandmother lived at Big Meadow.

Smith: She did? What was her name?

Lam: Mary Cathen (?) Thomas. The most outstanding thing about this is the I guess you would call it that she saw long years before the Park bought the land. She saw this road being built, and the people thought she had lost her mind. See she would tell them,

see she lived, you know where the cemetery is

Smith: The Thomas Cemetery, yeah.

Lam: Well now she lived right over from the cemetery. The house nearest to the cemetery was where my great grandmother lived. And something happened, she lost one of her eyes. She was blind in one eye. But she got real old, I think she lived to be in her 90's. And when she got real old, she would look out across the field and tell them that there was somebody digging up the sod. She said there were great big things that were tearing the sod all to pieces. And she said                   droves of people, the way she would say it, she'd say "Just look at the droves of people going through there." And there was nobody there, and there was nothing there. And she just kept talking about that, seeing the people, said that the Longs that the land belonged to, said they was going to be so mad when they come up there and saw all this sod tore up. See, it was a grazing farm at that time. The cattle were in there and she was worried because they was a-tearing up the sod, and the cattle wouldn't have any grass to eat. And she would say "There is great droves of people going through." Well, then, at night, she'd say to us such bright lights shining in her window they'd have to hang something over this window to keep the light from hurting her eyes. I don't remember how many years that was before the Park came through. But then after the Park people bought the land, they started putting the road through, there was a shovel a-digging the dirt up, and see the people back there had never seen machinery like that work. Well there'd be a lot of people going through to look at it. And there it was just as plain as could be, what she had told them, and they thought she was losing her mind.

Smith: Isn't that an amazing story!



Lam: And then at night, they would work there at night too, and they would have to blast out these rocks with dynamite, and they had to put something over the windows so the rocks from this dynamite wouldn't knock the windows out of the sash (?)

Smith: Almost gives you an uncanny feeling, doesn't it, having that? Did she live to see this happen?

Lam: No, she was gone before the road come through. You know, she saw it, she saw it all before she died. She saw all of that. And people thought she had lost her mind and didn't know what she was talking about. Then after the road came through they seen it was exactly like she had told it, they knew she had saw a vision of it then.

Smith: How close were the houses? You know, the nearest neighbor would be about how far away, about a half a mile, or a mile, or?

Lam: Oh, you mean from this particular house?

Smith: No, just pretty generally.

Lam: In general. Well, yes, about half a mile would be about as close as would be together.

Smith: In Jollet Hollow they had a store, didn't they?

Lam: M-hm.

Smith: A lot of the mountain people came down to that store.

Lam: Yes.

Smith: What did they have in the store?

Lam: Well, generally just about the same things like they have now. Well, not as much different variety of things as they have now. See, at that time, people farmed and raised almost everything they lived on. They would raise potatoes; they had more potatoes than it took to last them through the winter. They would sell part of them,

and then they would buy their sugar and coffee and stuff like that with the stuff that they would sell that they raised more than they could use. And that's the way they made their living.

Smith: Do you recall if in that store they were given credit for the things they brought in, or were they given cash?

Lam: Well they would do both. You could sell eggs. That's what we did at my home. My daddy he had chickens, 50 or 75 laying chickens. Well then he would take the eggs to the store and trade the eggs for the groceries we had to have. Cause there was no work, not much work at that time. You couldn't get a job like you can now. There was no work to get, so you had to raise everything you could and what you raised more than you could use, you traded that for something you didn't have, like sugar, coffee, and

Smith: Kerosene.

Lam: Yes, and stuff like that.

Smith: Did the store have material to make clothes?

Lam: No, not that store didn't. Now if we had that we had to go to town to Elkton to get any material like that.

Smith: That was a long trip. How did you get to Elkton?

Lam: Walked.

Smith: And the people from the mountains would walk in to Elkton too?

Lam: Yes. Before they got cars, they would walk. I've walked from Jollet Hollow to Elkton many a many a time. It's about I expect it's nine miles, one way.

Smith: Nine miles one way. And then carry home what you had bought.

Lam: Buy what you need and carry it home.

Smith: Can you recall how much a pair of shoes cost?

Lam: \$1.98. A good pair of shoes cost \$1.98. That's what I used to buy and pay for my shoes. There was another pair you could get for \$1.15. It was called a Scout shoe.

Smith: Were they good sturdy shoes?

Lam: Oh, yes.

Smith: Would they last a long while?

Lam: Yes, they would. They were made out of pure leather, they would last.

Smith: Your people in the various hollows, did they do much visiting?

Lam: Oh yes. They would visit each other. And you didn't have to call up, course nobody had phones at that time, to call up to tell somebody you was coming when you wanted to go see somebody you just went on and you'd go to see them. You'd talk with them, they'd fix dinner for you. And you'd eat with them and go back home in the evening. And then sometimes they would come and visit you. And that's the way we did. And for entertainment a lot of, didn't anybody have televisions or radios at that time. Well, they made their own entertainment. They played music. They had their string music and they'd play the music theirselves. I used to do that myself.

Smith: Great! What tunes did you play?

Lam: Oh I was just, western tunes or the square dance music like we used to play for square dances.

Smith: "Turkey in the Straw" and things of that kind.

Lam: Yeah.

Smith: Did you ever play the tune "Fox Hunt" or "Fox Chase"?

Lam: I've heard it a lot. I didn't play it myself, but I have

heard it played a lot.

Smith: I'm dying to hear that because it was a good tune. Did they have many dances?

Lam: Well yes, they'd have dances. Every once in a while they'd have a dance, just like at somebody's house, they would move all the furniture out of one room and then they'd have the dance in this room.

Smith: Would they have food and drinks during this dance?

Lam: Well sometimes they would, not very often, they would do that. Oh, I guess somebody would bring in a bottle of booze or something like that, and have some drinks that way.

Smith: They made good moonshine.

Lam: Oh yes, they did.

Smith: Very good moonshine. It's a darn shame that they were stopped. As one            said to me like saying it was against the law to be a farmer, because it was a way of life, actually.

Lam: Yes, it was. You know, a lot of people made their living that way.

Smith: Yeah. You mentioned earlier that you knew the Burackers.

Lam: Yes, this George Buracker, you know he was a preacher. His wife and my mother were first cousins. I still go to visit some of them that live over in Madison, over next to Madison.

Smith: What are their names?

Lam: Pauline (?) is the one I go to visit.

Smith: Does she have a phone?

Lam: Yes.

Smith: Is it under her name?

Lam: Yes, I think it is. Now the name of that place is Reba (?), Reba, Virginia.

Smith: Yeah, I know Reba. Right. That was right near Camp Hoover, wasn't it?

Lam: Yes. They were the closest house to the camp.

Smith: Whose names (?) were in that family?

Lam: Well I don't know. It was a big family.

Smith: They pretty generally had large families, didn't they?

Lam: Yeah. I know there's one girl lives in West Virginia. She married one of the marines that was guard for Mr. Hoover when he was president. And then there's a couple of them lives around Culpeper. And the boys, I don't know where they live. There are several of the boys; I don't know where they live. But I do know who this one, Pauline that I was just speaking of, I do know where she lives. I visit her sometimes. we go over there.

Smith: Yes, Mrs. Cave, are you kin to each other?

Lam: Yeah, we're second cousins.

Smith: I thought so when you said your, was it your great grandmother, was a Thomas. Right. These people, most of them, as you say, raised everything that they ate. Now they ate pretty good, didn't they?

Lam: Oh yes.

Smith: How did they keep the things over the winter? Like vegetables.

Lam: Well, they were canned, some of them, and they would dry some. Like beans, they would dry beans, they would dry apples. And my grandmother, she used to dry cherries. They had a lot of cherry trees, and she would dry cherries, a lot of cherries in the summer. And then in the fall my granddaddy he would take the big long, we called them meal sacks. It's a white sack, great long like this, and

he would have that big bag full of dried cherries. He would take them to Stanley and buy the winter clothes with the money he got out of them cherries. That's how they got their clothes for winter.

Smith: Do you recall <sup>how</sup> they dried the cherries?

Lam: Well they just put out like a table, a scaffold they called it, they called it a scaffold, they put up the little frame and put boards over it, and maybe lay a cloth over the top of it, and just spread them out on there.

Smith: Would they pit them first?

Lam: Oh, yeah.

Smith: Why didn't bugs get at them.

Lam: Well, I don't think there were as many bugs in this area as now. Because the bugs didn't bother that thing (?) And you see, your garden stuff, you didn't have to spray anything in your garden. You didn't have to use any fertilizer. It was just what you might say a different world from what it is now.

Smith: The vegetables like turnips and cabbages and so on, how would they keep those over the winter?

Lam: They would bury them in the ground.

Smith: Dig a trench?

Lam: Yeah. Like cabbage, you dig a trench, and put the cabbage with the root sticking up. And then you pulled dirt in, or sometimes they put bark over them to keep the dirt from going right onto the cabbage. Of course the dirt didn't hurt them because the outside leaves had to come off anyway. And then they would put dirt over , and sometimes they would stack fodder over them to keep them from freezing. Potatoes the same way. They'd dig a hole and bury potatoes, and they'd put bark over the potatoes to keep <sup>the</sup> dirt

from going down through, and then cover them back up with dirt. And you'd cover it deep with dirt. It would freeze down to the potatoes, and they'd keep them like that.

Smith: And they came out nice and crisp and fresh.

Lam: Oh yes, they were just real solid, just like they were when you put them in there.

Smith: So they had good eating all winter long.

Lam: Yes, they did. This is why, like I was telling you about my great grandmother, she had a son that was never married. Earnest Thomas. Maybe you know him. He lived down there right above where

Cave (?) He lived there until, after he moved off the mountain, he lived there then until he died. Well he never was married, and his sister, she was married but her husband died or they separated or something. Anyway they stayed together, they lived together, with their mother, until she died. She died, of course, up on the mountain when they lived up there. And then when they moved down off the mountain, down there right above where cave is, then they lived there. But what I was going to say, see, in the fall of the year, late in the fall, they would go out and buy up stuff, get their stuff for the winter that they had to have, like their flour and their meal, and coffee and stuff like that. They would go out and get enough in the fall of the year to last them almost through the winter, because when it snowed, this snow drifted and got so deep there was no way you could get out to get anything. And they had to store up enough to last through the winter.

Smith: Now they used horses to carry that

Lam: Yes, they would use horses. That is a very good point. Of course they had to do that. They did this all with, they had



built up enough credit in the stores to be able to do this, to buy all this produce for

Lam: Yes, they would do that, or they would take the stuff that they had raised, any excess that they didn't have to use in the winter they'd take that out and sell it, and then buy this stuff that they had to have, and bring back.

Smith: Did they smoke their own hams?

Lam: No, they salt-cured them. Yes, everybody would raise hogs and they'd have their own meat. They would cure it with salt.

Smith: Did they drink milk?

Lam: Yes.

Smith: Did they eat beef?

Lam: Yes. They'd eat beef, but they didn't have beef too often. Sometimes somebody in the neighborhood would butcher a beef. Then they would let the other people have some of it -- sell some of it to the other people that lived in the neighborhood. And that's the way they'd get their beef. They didn't have it at stores like they do now. My granddaddy used to butcher a beef; about every two years he would butcher a beef. And then the neighbors they would come in and buy it, just a small amount of it.

Smith: Would he butcher just before winter came so they could freeze it?

Lam: Yeah, well now they would dry cure that. they would just hang it up and let it dry cure. I don't think they put salt on that. It would dry cure and it would keep that way, you know after it got cold. They wouldn't (?) butcher them when it was warm.

Smith: Can you imagine trying to do that now, how covered with bugs it would have been.  
bugs it would have been



Lam: Oh Lord, it would be all covered, you couldn't do it.

Smith: You couldn't do it now. And the cabbages, I understand were always much bigger than they've been able to grow since.

Lam: Yes very large head.

Smith: I wonder why it was.

Lam: I don't know why that is.

Smith: Would you rotate crops, or open up a new field when the one was used up?

Lam: No, you would still use the same garden all the time. See, the only fertilizer they used was the litter from your barn, from your cows and horses, and they'd put that over the garden before they plowed. And they plowed that into the dirt and that's all the fertilizer they'd need.

Smith: And that kept it fresh.

Lam: And they'd keep planting the same garden over and over.

Smith: Because some of the sections used to open up new fields, they called it, and let the old fields just sit for a while.

Lam: Yes, yes, they did that too.

Smith: Did they use plows for the gardens?

Lam: Yes. Plows pulled by horses.

Smith: Most people had a horse or a mule, didn't they?

Lam: Yes.

Smith: And most of them had at least one cow.

Lam: Yes, one or two. Sometimes we had as many as three or four cows at a time.

Smith: What would you do with all the excess? Or did you have a big, big family too?

Lam: Well, we didn't have too much of a family, but we'd, the

milk that we couldn't use we'd feed that to the hogs. All that really makes hogs grow. Then you didn't have to use your corn; that would take the place of your corn till your corn crop got ripe.

Smith: Back to the Burackers. After they had moved out of the Park, or out of the mountains, what did the children grow up to be? Did any of them go become like lawyers, or doctors, or anything of that kind?

Lam: No. No, they just ordinary people just, you know, they didn't, there wasn't any lawyers or doctors or anything.

Smith: Speaking of doctors, what did the people in the mountains do when they got sick. Was there a

Lam: They would call a doctor. Somebody would have to go out to where they could get to a phone. Or even before they had the phones they would go and get the doctor, where ever they had to go. Now like, where my grandmother lived, in Weaver Hollow. Well, it was above Weaver Hollow, but they were still on the mountain. They would walk to Luray and get a doctor. He would ride his horse back to

. Or they would drive their horse to Luray and then the doctor would drive his horse back to take care of them.

Smith: Do you know what diseases they had in particular?

Lam: Well I don't know, they , ordinary disease like measels, whooping cough and stuff like that and pneumonia, and they sometimes they

Smith: Did you ever see any case of rickets?

Lam: No.

Smith: Great! I'm glad, because that's one of the things that everybody keeps saying, "Oh, everybody had rickets because they weren't fed properly." This discipline with the children, though,

was very good, wasn't it?

Lam: Oh yes. Yes, the children there they obeyed good. They had to.

Smith: Was it the mother, or the father, or both?

Lam: Both.

Smith: You never heard any back-talk from any of the children.

Lam: Oh no. No back talk

Smith: Did each one have a particular job he was supposed to do, or they all just sort of pitched in and knew that, well, this job has to be done, and all did it?

Lam: Yeah, well, now at my home, see there was three of us children. I have a brother and a sister. When we were kids growing up, when we got big enough to work, my brother he would feed the chickens and gather in the eggs. And I would feed the pigs. And then we'd both get in the wood that they needed to last until the next day. You see we had to cut our firewood. That's all the fuel we had was wood to heat and cook with.

Smith: Was there much to do in the winter? Much work?

Lam: Well not a whole lot. There was some work we could do, but in the wintertime there wasn't, we'd hunt right much.

Smith: Yes, that was a nice relaxing time then, wasn't it?  
What would you hunt?

Lam: Well we'd hunt small game, rabbit, squirrel, and grouse, and such things and things.

Smith: Possum?

Lam: Yeah.

Smith: Were there any coons?

Lam: Yeah, there were some. Not too many, but there was some

coons. Some people would get coons.

Smith: And there weren't any deer then.

Lam: No.

Smith: How about fishing? Did you do much fishing?

Lam: Yeah, I used to fish, but the way I fished then you can't do it now. I fished with a snare. It's a fine piece of copper wire. You make a loop, so big, and the water's got to be clear so you can see the fish. Then you just run that up over a fish and jerk on the pole, and that will draw up around him and bring him out. That's the way I used to fish.

Smith: Great! George Corbin told about one time that, he used to use dynamite I think he said, in a pool. And he threw in some dynamite because there were a lot of fish in this pool, and all of the fish came out, and all of the water came out. He emptied the pool.

Lam: Yeah, but the trouble with doing that, you kill all the little fish too. That kills everything. I never did do that.

Smith: No. How about huckleberries? I know a lot of people in the mountains used to periodically burn the woods to make sure they were going to get huckleberries. Did you see that done much?

Lam: Yes, I have seen it done.

Smith: It did assure that they were going to have huckleberries, did it.

Lam: Oh, yes.

Smith: How much did they get for huckleberries? Do you know?

Lam: I don't know about, when I used to pick I think I got about 18 or 20 cents a gallon.

Smith: Oh, that's terrible. All that work?

Lam: Yeah, but you could take that 20 cents and buy right much with it.

Smith: What could you buy with 20 cents?

Lam: Well you could buy as much with 20 cents as you can buy with probably three dollars now.

Smith: Well, yeah, a couple pair of shoes. About schools, where were the schools located? Did the children have a long distance to walk to get to school?

Lam: Well, some of them did, yes.

Smith: So did they go?

Lam: Yes. The school I went to, in Jollet Hollow, it was about close to a mile from where I lived. And it was pretty rough going to school sometimes, when it was real cold, or rainy, or bad weather. But we didn't miss too much.

Smith: Was it a nine-month school?

Lam: Yeah.

Smith: And what grade did it go up to?

Lam: Sixth. And I only went to the fifth grade. That's as high as I got.

Smith: Why?

Lam: Well, see, my daddy had bronchial asthma, and he was not able to work much. And at that time I got , I could work on the farm, and do a lot of work. And I had to quit school and help him on the farm. That way I didn't have a chance to get much education.

Smith: I bet you weren't sorry one bit.

Lam: No. I'd rather work any time than to go to school.

Smith: What did they teach? Reading? Writing?

Lam: Reading, writing, and arithmetic, language, and geography.

Smith: Was there emphasis placed on the arithmetic, or not? Did they emphasize arithmetic? Did they have you study that particularly hard?

Lam: Yes. Now when I went to school, that was my easiest lesson, was my arithmetic. I liked that. I could do that better than any of the other lessons (?). Now reading, I was always a very poor reader.

Smith: That's too bad. I'll bet you read now though, don't you?

Lam: Some. Not a whole lot. I never did take too much interest in reading. I reckon it was cause I couldn't do it too well.

Smith: How about church? Did the people go to church regularly?

Lam: Yes. They went to church.

Smith: Were there churches close.

Lam: Yeah, well the church it was the distance of about the school. In fact, the school I went to, the church was right on the hill above the schoolhouse. They was right together.

Smith: Was it any particular denomination?

Lam: Well that was the Methodists started that place.

Smith: I'm trying to think. Were you anywhere near, no you weren't. I was wondering about the Grove Hill Mission. Pine Grove.

Lam: No, I wasn't close to Pine Grove.

Smith: No, because you were too far this way. How did they celebrate Christmas?

Lam: Well, didn't many people have a Christmas tree at that time. Usually they'd have one in church. You know, the school would have their Christmas tree in church. And for Christmas we'd get one toy, and a little bag of candy and an orange, is about what I would

get for Christmas. And I think that toy was a 10-cent toy like a cap pistol or something like that. But we were real tickled with it. We were just as proud of it as if it toy.

Smith: Did you shoot firecrackers?

Lam: Oh yes. We had a lot of firecrackers.

Smith: Did you <sup>GO</sup> get a KRIS KRINGLE ?

Lam: Yes, we did that too. We used to have a lot of fun doing that.

Smith: How would you dress up sometimes?

Lam: Oh, different ways. I dressed one time, I put a dress on like a woman. And there was a pair of lady's shoes I could put on, and I remember I wore them one time. I wore women's shoes and nobody could guess who I was .

Smith: How did you change your face?

Lam: Oh we'd make a face out of a, sometimes out of a paper bag. Take a paper bag and turn it up and pull it down over your face, and cut holes where you could see through it, and like a mouth. And they'd take some cotton and put across it for ~~for~~ the mustache.

Smith: I wish they still did that. That was great fun, wasn't it?

Lam: Yes, it was.

Smith: Was there much drinking at Christmas?

Lam: Well, some people drank right much, but there wasn't a lot of misbehaving.

Smith: No, I don't mean misbehaving, but just having a good

Lam: A lot of them drank, yeah. I used to do a little bit of it myself.

Smith: Why, of course. You're human. They didn't celebrate Thanksgiving, did they?

Lam: No.

Smith: Do you know how the fellows and gals in the mountains did their courting?

Lam: Well, they would, you'd go with a girl, you'd like go to church with her, and take her home. Or maybe to a neighbor's house and play games. They used to play games.

Smith: What games?

Lam: Well, they had checkers; they used to play checkers. And another game they called parcheesi. You used dice and buttons to play that. That's the game I liked to play. And then some times if we'd have a gathering, we'd have other kinds of games like post office and games like that -- kissing games.

Smith: Were the girls pretty well chaperoned?

Lam: Yes.

Smith: . Weddings were very simple, weren't they?

Lam: Yes. They didn't have church weddings like they do now.

Smith: This is not a very happy subject, but one we should cover: funerals. Now when a person died, they were kept in the home, weren't they?

Lam: Yes.

Smith: And then there was no embalming, was there?

Lam: No.

Smith: When they were buried, everybody stayed there at the grave site?

Lam: Yeah. That's different from what it is now. You see, they would take him to the grave, and they would bury him. And the choir,



the church choir, they would sing, all the time they were closing the grave in. But they don't do that

Smith: That shows a lot of respect, and I think it was fine that they used to do that. I wish they still did. Did they use regular monuments, or did they use rocks and sometimes

Lam: Well a lot of them just used rocks. At the time I guess they didn't have the money to buy the monument. They would just put up a rock at each end to .

Smith: Did they buy the coffins, or did they make them.

Lam: Well mostly they would buy them. Sometimes they would make them. Well now my daddy, he used to make coffins for children. He's made several for children.

Smith: And you say you got a cap pistol or something like that at Christmas. Did you play like marbles?

Lam: Oh yeah, we had marbles. We played marbles in the summertime.

Smith: And pitch horseshoes?

Lam: Yes, we did that.

Smith: Or did you ever pitch rocks?

Lam: You mean like jackrocks?

Smith: No. Pitch rocks if you didn't have a horseshoe.

Lam: No, I didn't do that. We used to play (?) jackrocks, getting the rocks off of the ground this big to play jackrocks with.

Smith: How would you do that?

Lam: Well, you know they have the regular jackrocks now. And they have this little ball, bouncing ball with them. Well we didn't have that; we only had the rocks. We had to pick them up off the

ground to play with. Pitch them up and catch them on the back of your hand, then turn them over and pitch them up, and pick one up off the floor and catch the others when they come down.

Smith: That taught you to be nimble, too, didn't it? Yeah, everybody says that all the people did was work. And yet you had good times, didn't you?

Lam: Yes, but there wasn't as much work as there is now. Now in the summer like when we'd plant our crops, we'd be real busy for a while. When they'd get everything planted then there'd be a week maybe that we wouldn't have anything to do, until our crops got ready to cultivate. We'd get into it and we'd work it out; they'd get done and then we'd have another break. But now you never get a break. It's a rush all the time.

Smith: Was the ground very rocky?

Lam: Well yes, some of it was.

Smith: Did you have to move the rocks out, or did you plow around them?

Lam: Worked right on through. If they were big, we had to go around them. If they were small we'd just go right on through them. Now I had a great uncle that lived on Tanners Ridge. He farmed a little patch; it was a small patch. He would plant corn. And that was so rocky he would get dirt in a bucket and carry with him to put down to the corn when he dropped it, so it would sprout and come up. And it made corn.

Smith: That is rocky!

Lam: Yes, it would grow if he could get it to sprout. The roots would go down below the rock and get to the dirt. It would grow and make corn.

Smith: You, that takes a lot of ingenuity to have figured that out. That's the thing that is so amazing. The people had a lot of good native sense, and I guess, living out of doors as they did all the time, and walking as much as they did, it kept them strong and healthy.

Lam: Yeah. For a long time, at my house, we didn't have a horse, or a mule or anything like that. And we carried our wood for we'd carry it in. I did that a lot. And then sometimes we'd get a horse from the neighbor. We'd borrow a horse from you know, we would. But then we would run out and a lot of times we would carry it in for a while. I know when I first got old enough to work, by the time I was almost grown, the first suit of clothes I ever bought, I went in the mountains and cleared off a place right in the woods, cut the trees and everything. My uncle and me went together and did this. And we planted potatoes in this patch. And then when it come fall, time to dig the potatoes, we got, we'd go to the mountain (?) and I had, see we'd keep enough to last through the winter, to eat. And then we'd sell the excess we had. So I had ten bushels that I could sell. Well I sold my ten bushels of potatoes and I bought me a suit of clothes for seven dollars and a half. And that was the first suit of clothes I ever had.

Smith: How did you get those potatoes to the store? Carried them?

Lam: Well, we hauled them out on a wagon. We had a mule at that time, you know. That was before it got to be I used my granddaddy's horse. had a horse and a wagon, and I hauled them out on that.

Smith: The roads weren't that good.

Lam: muddy (?)

Smith: Yeah, and rocky too. How about apple<sup>#</sup>butter boiling?  
When it came time to make the apple butter, was that sort of a party affair?

Lam: Yes. Yeah, they'd make it that way. See, when they cut their apples, they'd go around to all their neighbors and say "Well we're going to have an apple cutting tonight." Well they'd all come in, and cut the apples, at night. And sometimes they would boil the butter at night. Some people would boil the butter at night. It would take around six hours to boil a kettle of butter. Some of the people would start it late in the evening so it would run on in the night. And they had to stir it all the time, you know and they had a thing going that a boy and girl would stir together. Well if they let the stirrer go up to the top of the kettle they'd get a kiss. So a lot of times they would do that, it would be accidental if you bumped it (??) If you bumped the kettle you would bump (?) her.

Smith: Did you get a kiss when you got a red ear of corn when you were shucking corn?

Lam: Oh, yeah.

Smith: Or did you get a drink?

Lam: Well, it would depend. If we had drinks, we would get a drink. Sometimes we would get a kiss if there was girls there too.

Smith: Did you ever do what they called stringing beans? You know, hanging them up to dry? Or, how would you dry the beans?

Lam: Well I've seen that done, but we always put them down, when we lived at the it was a big house, and the upstairs wasn't partitioned off; it was all one great big room. Well they would clean up the floor real clean and just spread the beans

out on the floor and they would dry. I dried beans this summer. I dried them upstairs. My house is not finished upstairs either. We've got one bedroom downstairs that's not finished. Well, I mopped up the floor, and I put a sheet down on the floor, and then I put these beans on the sheet. I dried almost a bushel and a half now that I've dried this summer.

Smith: That's better than eating beans you can buy <sup>in</sup> the store, aren't they?

Lam: Oh yes . Yeah you cook a big pot of them and put a big chunk of pork meat in them, it makes them good.

Smith: It sure does. That's really good eating. Roughly what would be a typical breakfast? That you would have.

Lam: Well we would have pork meat, and gravy, and home made bread. Now my mom (?) she'd make what they called hoecake bread. It wouldn't be in biscuits; it would be in just two big pieces, and mom (?) she had this bread pan, it was this big. Well you'd get but two pieces in that pan, dough, and make it and then break it off.

Smith: That was good, that hoecake.

Lam: She would just break it off in pieces and pass it around to us. And another thing, we'd have buckwheat cakes. You know what they are. The way she would do that, she would put the dish, she would have things she called miracles (?). I don't know whether you know what I'm talking about or not, but it was something to make the work, sour like. And she would put in a jar, a gallon jar, and mix this stuff up with her buckwheat flour, and put these in there and during the night, she'd set it where it would be warm, and during the night it would raise way up to the top of the jar. And in the morning she'd get up to fix breakfast; she'd stir it up good,

and then just pour it in the skillet and make buckwheat cakes. And then you'd take that and then she'd fry pork meat, like shoulder or ham or something like that, or even the side meat. She'd fry that, and we'd take that buckwheat cake, put it on our plate, and cover it up with grease, the grease out of that meat. They'd cover it up with that, and they'd put gravy on top of that yet.

Smith: That was a substantial breakfast!

Lam: It was. And that's the way we'd eat.

Smith: And I imagine you had three big meals, really, a day, didn't you?

Lam: Yes, we'd eat three meals a day.

Smith: None of this little old skimping around and having a hamburger.

Lam: We didn't know what a hamburger was at that time. We had sausage.

Smith: You made your own sausage, I imagine.

Lam: Yeah, we made our own sausage.

Smith: Was that a lot of work?

Lam: Well, it was right much.

Smith: Did you do your butchering in the fall?

Lam: M-hm, yeah.

Smith: Would all the neighbors get together for the butchering?

Lam: Yeah, we'd have a lot of help, come butchering time. We'd need (?) certain people would do the butchering, the main butchering, you know cutting up the meat. We had an uncle, he did a lot of butchering. He was real good; he could trim it out real nice. And he would always butcher for me. And then we'd get the other people to help too.

Smith: That is the thing that I think is so wonderful, the way people helped each other.

Lam: Oh yeah. Yeah now, before I got big enough to butcher, I was at my uncle's (?), I would go over to there house when they butchered. Course I wasn't big enough to do anything, but I'd watch them. And they did it different from the way they did after

to do it. They used a tub to scald the hogs in. You know now they use a big long pan, they make a fire under it and heat the water. Well then, they made what they called it a . They'd take wood, and put a layer of wood and then put a layer of rocks on, and then put more wood and more rocks, and keep building it on up to five feet high or so. And then on the morning when they was going (?) to butcher they'd fire this wood, and till all that wood burned down them rocks would be real hot. So they'd pick them up with a shovel and put them down in this big tub. They had the big tub, oh a real big thing, and they put them rocks down in that tub and heat the water that way. And they couldn't put the whole hog in there at one time. They'd put but one end of him down in there and scald him and then take it out and turn him around and put the other end down and scald it. That was a lot of work to do it that way. But that's the way the first butchering I ever saw done was done like that.

Smith: That was very wonderful using the rocks to heat the water. That was a heck of a lot easier than any other way, wasn't it?

Lam: Yeah, you could take a rock on your shovel and let it down there that water just boil up over it till that rock got cold and then you'd take it out and put another one in. And keep on, you could get the water hot enough it would scald them all right.

Smith: Did you ever have a house burn down or anything of that



kind while you were up there?

Lam: No. We might have fire two different times, but we put it out. It burned a hole about this big in the roof one time. But we put it out. It didn't burn it down.

Smith: I'm just wondering now, if for instance somebody's house had burned down, what you all would have done to help.

Lam: Well, there was a neighbor, well there was a little bit of relation to me , their house burned down. And they have of excess furniture they'd give it to them, or give them dishes or stuff like that they had something extra, they would help them out that way, and . They'd just build their house back, the neighbors would help them.

Smith: How I wish we were like that today!

Lam: Wouldn't that be a lot better?

Smith: There wasn't any stealing, was there? I'll bet there wasn't a lock on a house, was there?

Lam: No, there wasn't much stealing around then. There was just a few people around that would, you could mighty near count ~~them~~ on your fingers all the people in the whole neighborhood that would take something that didn't belong to them.

Smith: And how did you treat those people that, since you knew who they were?

Lam: Well, you couldn't prove that you knew it, but I think you couldn't really prove that they did, so we'd treat them all right. I mean you didn't mistreat them in any way.

Smith: But I heard they were ostracized, that they were just really left out of all the doings in the community if they did any stealing.



Lam: Well, not altogether.

Smith: They weren't popular, though.

Lam: No. But there was a difference there.

Smith: Were there any shootings that you knew of.

Lam: Yes. There was a man, he was an man. I don't know what he had done. He had done something and he got in the pen. Well he broke out, and they were trying to catch him. I think he had broke into stores (?) And he was staying at this man's house; he lived way back the last house up to the mountain. And this was one of the men that would steal. And he was staying at this house. He'd stay there of a night and then he'd get out and leave real early in the morning, and go on back on the mountains and stay in the mountains all day. And then at night he would sneak back to the house. Well they found out that he was staying there. And the law officers went in one morning before daylight, and hid on this path where he left the house to go up to the mountain. So when he come out that morning to go to the mountain, this officer tried to halt him, to stop him. Told him to put his hands up. Well, he put one hand up, and come out with his gun with the other hand, and started shooting. I don't know how many shots were fired but there was a lot of them. They got him. They shot him. It didn't kill him there; they took him to the hospital, but he died up there (?) He died and then the next day he died.

Smith: He was a real bad man.

Lam: Yes, he was.

Smith: Just as good it happened to him. You know, that must have been a long walk for you. This is a change of subject, but I was just thinking, a long walk to go from your home to the Burackers.

It was up over the mountain and back down again. Wasn't it?

Lam: Well the time when I went there, we went to my great grandmother's

Smith: At Big Meadows.

Lam: Yeah, before I was grown. I was just maybe ten, eleven years old. You see, it was so far we didn't get to go much. My mother she wanted to go see, it was her grandmother, and we went, we stayed a week up there with her, . And then we went from there down to the Burackers'. And that way it wasn't too far. Well, it was a long walk too, but I mean at that time you didn't mind walking. You could go (?), just keep on walking.

Smith: Did you ever see any of the people in Nicholson and Corbin Hollow?

Lam: No.

Smith: I'm just trying to think of other families that you might have known. You say you vaguely recall Weakleys.

Lam: Yeah, I can remember some of the Weakleys. There's one of those Weakleys lived down here above Stanley, that lived at Big Meadow. That's Reed (?) Weakley. I think he's in the hospital now, I heard yesterday. He was Mr. Jim Weakley's son. He lived up there in Big Meadow,

Smith: Did you ever go to Skyland to enjoy any of the things that Pollock was putting on?

Lam: No, I never had a chance to go up there.

Smith: That's surprising, because that wasn't that far away from Big Meadows. And Pollock used to put on a lot of big parties. And always the mountain people were welcome to them, and you know, they'd have a great time. And a lot of people worked for Pollock,

too. You never thought of joining the CCC.

Lam: No, I never thought of doing it (?)

Smith: That was good work, I mean that was good pay that they gave for those times.

Lam: Yes, it was. But then again, I had to stay home because my dad wasn't able to work, and I had to stay home and help him do the farming work.

Smith: When they were thinking about the Park, did you have a chance to talk with any of the people and get their reaction to the fact that they were going to have to move?

Lam: No, I didn't have a chance to talk to any of them myself. But the way I understood, that when they first started that, they told them nobody would have to move. And then later on, after they got the land, then they started to

Smith: That was a real misunderstanding, wasn't it.

Lam: It was, yeah. They told them there would be work, for (?) everybody. Well there was no work at that time and they were kind of anxious for it because they thought there would be work. But then it didn't work out that way.

Smith: Did they really, the kin that you had that had to move out, how did they feel about being moved?

Lam: Well, they didn't like it. They didn't want to lose (?) the . I know one family, this was the Jenkins family, and they fought against it until they come and set them out in the road. They've got pictures, told me; I've never seen them but she says they got them in Luray in the Headquarters, they got pictures of that lady. They carried her out of the house to put her in the car and took her to Luray. And then they set their furniture and

everything they had probably out to the road, and . And that's how hard she fought agin' it; she wanted to stay there.

Smith: But when you think about it, if the people had stayed, they would not have been allowed to farm the way they were doing. So what would they have done for a living? You know, there would have been no way to

Lam: somebody.

I've (?) thought of it this way: If they'd left those people there, and let them farm and leave them just like they had been, it seems to me that that would have been more interesting to the tourists that came through, than just to not see anybody in it.

Smith: But the people would have soon started changing their way of doing it, because civilization would have shown them different ways to do it, and they'd have been changed anyway, I think.

Lam: Well, they might have.

Smith: Did you ever hear from your grandmother or great grandmother where your family came from.

Lam: No, I really don't know where they came from.

Smith: I keep wondering how the people found time

Lam: granddaddy is about as far back as I can go. I don't know where they came from.

Smith: Wouldn't you think that of an evening they would have sat around saying "Now I want you children to know that we came from so-and-so in such-and-such a year."

Lam: Yes, it does look like they would have done that.

Smith: Yeah. Nobody did. Not a soul.

Lam: They didn't anything like that at all, I mean they just

Smith: Have you any idea why the people really didn't go out of the mountains much -- why they just stayed there? They really didn't like strangers, I know that.

Lam: They were content. They were satisfied there.

Smith: But why were they suspect of strangers?

Lam: I don't know.

Smith: Because they really were. They, you know, if a stranger came up they were looked at with

Lam: Oh, yeah, yeah, I know that.

Smith: It seems as though there was a reason sort of handed down that people forgot why it was, don't trust strangers, you know, because all of them had the same reaction. And what I understand, they would send any nigger running out after he came in the mountains he'd go out hightailin'.

Lam: Yes, there was a time that they didn't think much of them.

Smith: Yeah. So there were reasons for that, and I wish we knew what they were.

Lam: Yeah. Now my granddaddy, he was scared of them. He just thought they were dangerous, you know. I don't know why. Course he never had any trouble with them, or anything like that, but he would always tell his children to stay away from them, not get where they were at (??) Maybe they were dangerous.

Smith: Did anyone in your family go into the Civil War, that you know of?

Lam: Well now, I . My great granddaddy on my daddy's side, I believe, was in the Civil War. But that's beyond anything I can explain to you about that. I don't remember. I remember hearing them talk about it, about him being in the Civil War.

Smith: He was probably with Jackson, don't you imagine.

Lam: He might have been. I guess (?) so.

Smith: That's another thing. How did they know a war was going on, and yet they did. If they stayed in the mountains, how did they know that there was a war?

Lam: I don't know. Well, at that time they had to roam over the country and gather up <sup>the</sup> men to go to the war. They called them "conscript hunters", I think. And I know, there was an old lady that lived right next to us when we lived up in the mountains, that she would talk a lot about that. She was a real old lady when I was just a kid. And she would talk about the conscript hunters that and they caught some man and was going to take him to the war. And they give him a chance to run. They was taking him on; well they just slowed down and walked slow and let him get a ways ahead of them. And he thought he could get away, and he run, and they shot him. I've heard this old lady talk about that.

Smith: You know, I think that the life style that these people had was such a wholesome one, and such a good one that, well, it's done an awful lot of good for our country, having people of that kind. Can you think of anything I have not asked you? Herbs! Do you know what herbs your mother used? Like if you got a cold, what would she do for you?

Lam: Well I don't believe she used herbs for that. She would take kerosene and lard, and I believe put maybe a little turpentine in it, and heat it, and take a flannel cloth and they'd make this with it and then put it on your chest at night and they'd leave it there all night. That's what you would do to break up a cold. Now as far as herbs, there was a, there's a weed

that will cure snake bite, and I know what that is. I know what that weed is when I see it.

Smith: Oh. You don't know the name of it.

Lam: They call it snakeweed.

Smith: Oh yeah, snakeweed. And what would you do with the snakeweed?

Lam: Well you take this weed and put it in a little container and put water in it and boil it, like tea, like. You take the weed out of this water and put it on the snake bite, and wrap it up with a rag, and take the water you boiled it in and pour it on it. Now my uncle, that lived up on the mountain above Jollet Hollow, up in there, his wife was bitten one evening by a copperhead. She went down to her chicken house or someplace, and there were (?) weeds alongside the path, and this copperhead bit her. So it was a long ways to have got her to a doctor, and no way to take her but walk. Well he knew where this snakeweed was, all up the mountain above where he lived. Well he lit up this old kerosene lantern, and went up this mountain and found that weed, and brought it home and fixed it up and put it on that snake bite, and it cured it. And she didn't have to go to a doctor. I used to keep some of that snakeweed here. I'd get me a bunch of it. I'd tie it up and hang it on the porch, and I'd keep it around the house. But for the last year or so I haven't got any.

Smith: Well, it's always handy to have.

Lam: Sure it is.

Smith: You know, men were very protective of their wives, and very loyal to them, and to their children.

Lam: Yes.



Smith: Can you think of any other things that they did? Did you ever have to take that kerosene with sugar in it for a cough. Or turpentine with sugar, that was it.

Lam: Turpentine, yeah. Yeah, I took that. My mom used to make cough syrup out of vinegar. She'd take vinegar and put sugar in it and make a syrup. And you take it a little taste at a time.

Smith: Did it work?

Lam: Yeah, and that would stop a cough.

Smith: Did you ever hear of using the fat from a rabbit to make rabbit oil in case you had an ear ache?

Lam: No, I've never heard of that. But I've heard of taking fish worms and stew them out and get the oil out of them for a goiter.

Smith: Fish worms.

Lam: Yes, I've heard of that.

Smith: And you'd boil them up to get the oil. Were there many goiters.

Lam: No, there wasn't too many. There were several people around that I knew of that had them.

Smith: I wonder why.

Lam: I don't know. I've got one myself. I don't know whether you can tell, but

Smith: No. the water, and yet the water was pure up there. That was good water. Well I think I have picked your brains, haven't I. This has been just wonderful. You don't know how I appreciate all the help that you have been.

Lam: much help.

Smith: Oh you sure have. It's wonderful, and oh I thank you so very very much.



Lam: You're quite welcome.

Smith: Well, you tell this Pauline Buracker, do you know what her husband's name is in the event it's not in her name.

Lam: No, she's never been married.

Smith: Oh. And she lives by herself?

Lam: No, her sister lives with her. She has a sister that's a little bit mentally retarded, and she lives with her.

Smith: Oh. I wonder why mentally retarded.

Lam: I don't know.

Smith: Were they closely intermarried, or anything like that?

Lam: No.

Smith: Just happened.

Lam: Yes. Just one of those things, I guess.

Smith: Well, OK, I do thank you.           END OF INTERVIEW

Smith: After the conclusion of this tape, Mr. Lam helped me identify many locations on the maps from the Park. He then took me on a tour through Jollet Hollow and Weaver Hollow. And when we reached Weaver Hollow he showed where his grandfather's home had been, and said that his grandfather, and then his father, were both blacksmiths. What they used to do in the winter was all the neighbors and relatives would bring their hoes and various garden implements down to his grandfather and then his father to have them sharpened. I asked if they charged anything for doing this, and he said no; all they charged was the amount that of the coal that was used. And he said usually that came to about five or ten cents. And so this shows some more of the cooperation of the people that lived in the mountains.